



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

TRUE FAITH IS NOT A FRIEND OF THIS WORLD-PART 1: JAMES 4:1-6

TO: COLORADO LEGISLATORS, SPOUSES AND THE GOVERNOR

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*A true believer will be evidenced by a life of growing righteousness that is sown in peace and is sowing in peace all while living in the midst of a turbulent, strife filled world. One who possesses a real and genuine faith will possess a wisdom from above that will be revealed through a righteous, selfish and peaceful life. This one will be marked by peace and cooperation rather than strife. The character of this wise person will be consistent, stable, trustworthy, and transparent. Their life will overflow with words and works of good deeds. They will be willing to extend mercy giving what is needed rather than what is deserved. They will be ready to cooperate when a better way is shown, approachable and willing to listen. They will be equitable and fair, courteous and considerate, pursuing peace but never at the expense of purity. They are not given to anger and strife, dissention and dispute but rather seek peace and cooperation. And to sum it up, the true believer will be revealed through a righteous life that pursues peace and promotes peace. And now James will move on in chapter 4 to show that a true believer will submit to God, living by such godly wisdom and is not a friend of this world or its wisdom.*

## I. CONFLICTS AND QUARRELS - JAMES 4:1

*James 4:1-6: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2. You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? 6. But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

Remember, the book of James was written to believers that were scattered abroad because of persecution. In chapter 3, James has laid down the foundation for believers to live and operate from a wisdom that comes from God. Worldly wisdom is evidenced by jealousy, selfish ambition and pride rooted in Satan's lies rather than God's truth. It stands in direct contrast to "wisdom that comes from above" characterized by humility and gentleness that's heavenly, spiritual and from God.

Yet, as we move into James 4, it is clear that "believers" are operating from a worldly wisdom revealed by conflicts, envy, self centered selfishness leading to disorder, chaos and every evil practice. Relationships with one another were marked by "quarrels and conflicts". Moving from the picture of a life governed by heavenly wisdom to the appalling picture in the opening verses of chapter 4 is startling, but it demonstrates effectively the need for this vigorous rebuke now administered to the spirit of worldliness.<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be supreme in our lives and we are to yield to Him as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him. (Romans 12:1-2) Yet, when we yield to our selfish desires, when pride takes the throne manifesting dissensions, strife, and quarrels among believers, God makes it clear in James 4 that He opposes the proud. (James 4:6) As believers, who would want to be opposed by God Himself?

Conflict among believers in the church is never God's will. God repeatedly throughout Scripture calls on His people to be one, to stand firm together, striving together for the gospel and not against one another. (1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 1:27, John 17:21) Yet, conflict is a frequent problem evidenced in 2 Corinthians 12:20 or Titus 3:1-3. Here in James 4, the author addresses those who seek to satisfy their self rather than yielding to God. James proceeds by asking two questions that identify the real issues.

### A. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF CONFLICT? - JAMES 4:1A

*James 4:1: "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?"*

James begins by asking a question, directing us right to the heart of the matter. He doesn't deal with whether the fights are over right or wrong issues but concentrates on what the conflicts demonstrate. James asks them to think about the source of their quarrels. That's the real concern. What is the source of their conflicts? What causes fights and quarrels among them?

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**%quarrels+Greek %machai,** plural, means hostility, serious disputing, battles, strife of any kind, animosity, bitter hatred.

**"conflicts+Greek %polemoi,"** plural, outbursts of hostility, can refer to literal wars or battles, a specific fight or battle.

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James chooses two very strong terms to describe the serious dissension and strife occurring. These two words are plural indicating this was not an isolated event but rather a constant condition. Believers were engaged in continual strife, absorbed in self-centered animosity, hostility and violent conflict. Quarrels and conflicts can refer to physical violence as well as violent conflicts which are often verbal disputes that spew out bitter hatred through harsh words, criticism and slander.

We see this way too often in the world and even in our own communities. But where does James say this is taking place... "among you". How could this be? James is describing the readers of this letter. The relationships among themselves, in the church, were filled with violent, quarrelsome, self seeking, strife-filled discord and struggle. These are turbulent relationships that

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## BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAY @ 7:15 AM, RM 0109 – COLORADO STATE CAPITOL

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marked these “believers.” And while it is true that some battles must be fought, it must never be by sacrificing Christian principles.

But what is James concerned about most? What is the source of such strife among you? What causes such hostility among you who are called to love and live with a wisdom that is “*pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy sowing peace and promoting peace*”? (James 3:17-18) James answers this question by asking another.

### B. IS NOT THE SOURCE YOUR PLEASURES? - JAMES 4:1B

*James 4:1: “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?”*

James answers with a question challenging his readers to acknowledge the obvious truth without dispute. James doesn’t waste time, directing his arrow right at the heart of the matter. James addresses in the negative (“*Is not the source*”) and assertively points to the true source of such strife. What is the source of all the strife and hostility being described... “*your pleasures*”.

**%pleasures+Greek %hedonon,**” from where we get the word hedonism, referring to enjoyment derived from the fulfillment of one’s desires, the gratification of sensual, fleshly desires, the uncontrolled desire to fulfill passions.

What is the source for such internal conflict? Their personal, uncontrolled pursuit of fulfilling their fleshly desires is the source of such conflict. While this term is not used often in the New Testament, each occurrence is in the negative sense referring to the craving for pleasure, the strong desire to gratify self. (Luke 8:4, Titus 2:3, 2 Peter 2:23) This is a self love that stands in opposition to God Who calls on us to die to ourselves and live for God. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:2-4 “*For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power and avoid such men as these.*” This is how we lived before we were saved, not after. Yet these “believers” were “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*”.

James exhorts that the pursuit of these self seeking, self fulfilling pleasures were at the heart of their hostile conflicts. There was no noble battle for truth here in these quarrels. The hostile conflicts did not come from some reason beyond their own control. The unpleasant truth was that their strife stemmed from surrendering to their own self-seeking desires. This was the source of their conflict that “*waged war in your members*”

**%waged war+Greek %on strateuomenon,**” means engaged in

constant conflict, warfare, it is the idea of the pleasures as soldiers carrying on a military campaign aimed at securing the satisfaction of their craving.<sup>2</sup>

James refers to these self seeking pleasures that wage war, that carry on a military campaign with the goal of securing the satisfaction of their craving. Where is this war being waged? James says “*within your members*”. This war is taking place within you. James is not referring here to the external fight that wages but rather the inner battle of sinful, selfish craving. The external conflicts between people reveal the inner struggle taking place. Romans 7:18-25 describes this inner conflict. “*For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very things I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!...*”

Unbelievers are slaves to their sinful desires. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5) But believers are set free to serve God and are no longer slaves of sin and its cravings. While there is constant conflict with the things of the world, we are set free from being controlled by sin. Romans 8 speaks to this good news. Romans 8:1-2 says, “*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*” Therefore, the external conflicts present among “believers” and rebuked by James in chapter 4 should never be named among Christians for we have been set free from our sin. Paul reproves the one who calls himself a believer yet is controlled by sin in 1 Corinthians 15:34 by saying, “*Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.*”

The seventeenth century Jewish philosopher Spinoza observed, “I have often wondered that persons who make boasting of professing the Christian religion- namely love, joy, peace, temperance and charity to all men- should quarrel with such rancorous animosity and display daily towards one another such bitter hatred that this rather than the virtues which they profess, is the readiest criteria of their faith.”<sup>3</sup>

What does the world observe as they see you engaged at the Capitol? Are there conflicts and quarrels among you? What is the source? Next time we will look at their tragic results.

<sup>1</sup>Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Hiebert, D. Edmond, *James*. Moody Bible Institute: Chicago, Illinois, 1992. Pg. 223.

<sup>3</sup>Moo, Douglas J., *The Letter of James*. Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000. Pg.181.